

Graham Greene - The Third Man

A classic tale of friendship and betrayal

"Graham Greene was in a class by himself ... He will be read and remembered as the ultimate chronicler of twentieth-century man's consciousness and anxiety..

William Golding

I. Life of the author

Henry Graham Greene was born on 2 October 1904 in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, England and was one of six children. At the age of eight he attended the Berkhamsted school where his father Charles was the head teacher. As a teenager he was under so immense pressure that he got psychological problems and suffered a nervous breakdown. In 1922 he was enrolled on the Balliol College, Oxford and in 1926 after graduation he started to work for the London Times as sub-editor and for the Nottingham Journal as journalist, where he met his later wife Vivien Dayrell-Browning. In February 1926 before marrying his wife he was received into the Roman Catholic Church, which had influenced him and his writings (moral, religious, social themes). In 1929 his first novel *The Man Within* was published, so he became a freelance writer in 1930, but his popularity wasn't sealed before *Stamboul Train* (Orient Express) was published in 1932. In 1935 he became the house film critic for The Spectator. In 1938 he published *Brighton Rock* and visited Mexico to report on the religious persecution there and as a result he wrote *The Lawless Roads* and *The Power and the Glory*. In 1940 he was promoted to literary editor for The Spectator. In 1941 - World War Two - he began to spy voluntarily for the British Foreign Office in Sierra Leone, western Africa and resigned in 1943 because of being accused of collusion and traitorous activities that never substantiated. He spent the rest of the war travelling widely and produced on his experiences he made *The Heart of the Matter* in 1948. In 1950 *The Third Man* was published which was written as a film treatment. So the book became famous after the movie had been released in 1949 and Greene states: "The Third Man was never to be read but only to be seen". In 1975 he separated from his wife and on 3 April 1991 he died in Vevey, Switzerland.

Greene's novels can be divided into *entertainments* (e.g. *The Third Man*, *Our Man In Havana*) and *serious novels* (e.g. *The Matter of The Heart*). The entertainments set priority on the suspense not on the message and the serious novels deal with serious problems. He was influenced by R. Browning, Joseph Conrad, R. L. Stevenson (his grand-uncle), Rider Haggards, M. Bowens and John Buchans.

In his entertainments he uses the devices of a thriller to show the struggle between good and evil within his characters, also the conflict within his characters between secular love and love of god, also moral doubt and psychological conflict. His novels are filled with exotic locales, vivid imagery and unique detached portrayal of characters that became his trademark, which also made up the terms Greeneland, stream of consciousness and seediness of the world. He often dealt with topical incidents mixed with fiction, so he became a kind of a predictor because like in *The Third Man* the fictitious crime was true.

II. Literary works of the author

• NOVELS

The Man Within
The Name of Action
Rumour at Nightfall
Stamboul Train
It's a Battlefield

England Made Me
A Gun for Sale
Brighton Rock
The Confidential Agent
The Power and the Glory
The Ministry of Fear
The Heart of the Matter
The Third Man
The End of the Affair
Loser Takes All
The Quiet American
Our Man in Havana
A Burnt-Out Case
The Comedians
Travels with my Aunt
The Honorary Consul
The Human Factor
Doctor Fischer of Geneva *or* The Bomb Party
Monsignor Quixote
The Tenth Man
The Captain and the Enemy

• SHORT STORIES

Twenty-One Stories
A Sense of Reality
May We Borrow Your Husband?
The Last Word and other stories

• TRAVEL

Journey Without Maps
The Lawless Roads
In Search of a Character
Getting to Know the General

• ESSAYS

Collected Essays
The Pleasure Dome
British Dramatists
J'accuse
Yours etc.
Reflections

• PLAYS

The Living Room
The Potting Shed
The Complaisant Lover
Carving a Statue
The Return of A. J. Raffles
The Great Jowett
Yes and No
For Whom the Bell Chimes

• AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A Sort of Life

Ways of Escape
Fragments of Autobiography
A World of My Own: A Dream Diary

• BIOGRAPHY

Lord Rochester's Monkey
An Impossible Woman

• CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The Little Train
The Little Horse-Bus
The Little Steamroller
The Little Fire Engine

III. The novel

• Dramatis personae

Rollo Martins alias Buck Dexter, English author of cheap westerns
Harry Lime, old school friend and idol of Martins
Colonel Calloway, English police officer and observer narrator
Anna Schmidt, actress and Lime's girl-friend, feigns to be Austrian but is Hungarian
Dr. Winkler, Lime's doctor and present doctor at the accident
Colonel Cooler, a friend of Lime
Herr Kurtz, a friend of Lime
Herr Koch, Lime's caretaker and witness of Lime's accident
Mr. Crabbin, representative of the fictitious British Cultural Relations Society
Benjamin Dexter, a fictional novelist
Joseph Harbin, a friend of Lime

• Plot

The story is narrated by Calloway who reconstructs his police files. Rollo Martins travels after the World War II to the into four zones divided Vienna to visit his old school friend Harry Lime, who had invited him to Austria to report on international refugees. When arriving, Martins finds out that his friend was run over by car and died. At Lime's funeral he meets Colonel Calloway who states that Lime was the worst racketeer in Vienna who would have been arrested if he had not been killed. Martins dissents from Calloway because he always regarded Lime as a hero and as an idol. He cannot prove it, because Martins has to leave Vienna tomorrow for lack of money. Fortunately, at his hotel Martins is taken for Benjamin Dexter by Crabbin, therefore he got a hotel room for one week plus expenses, but he must host a lecture and literary discussion. Thus, he starts his own inquiry at first with Kurtz who explains the accident but Martins is not satisfied, he thinks Lime was murdered. Visiting Schmidt, she tells the same as Cooler did, but mentions that even the driver was a friend of Lime. After that, he visits the doctor to question him, but gets no information. At Lime's apartment he meets Koch who reveals that he is a witness who did not give evidence. He claims that there was a third man whom he could not identify. Martins wants Koch to give evidence but he refuses to do it and outraged. So Martins visits Cooler who tells the same story as Kurtz and asks him about the third man, but he has not seen a third man. Then he visits Schmidt again and tells her about his latest investigation, so they decide to question Koch again. As they arrived, Koch was murdered, therefore they fled and Martins went back to his hotel where Calloway was waiting. He tries to escape and was driven to the literary discussion. After the discussion Martins was brought to Calloway. Calloway makes an inquiry about Cooler, Kurtz, Dr. Winkler and Koch. Martins tells him about the third man, then Calloway informs him about Lime's rackets: In those days, only military hospitals were supplied with Penicilin in Austria, thus no civilian doctor or hospital owns it. As a result Penicillin was stolen and sold to Australian doctors for much money. Finally, an organisation was founded and penicillin was diluted. The consequences were that it

causes venereal diseases and meningitis. Then he showed evidences that Lime, Kurtz, Cooler, Winkler and Harbin, who vanished, were involved. So Martins gets disillusioned and disappointed about Lime and he wants to leave Vienna, but he cannot because of the Austrian police. Both think that Kurtz or third man killed Lime, so he tries to find third man. After the inquiry he visits Schmidt and tells her all about Lime and as leaving her, he meets the third man who is Lime. He pursues him to an iron kiosk where he vanished, so he informs Calloway. In the meantime Schmidt was to be arrested by the four powers because of her papers. Martins and Calloway find a door in the kiosk with stairs to the sewer system, which was used for smuggling. Knowing that Lime is alive, Martins makes an appointment with him at the Prater's Great Wheel where he realises that Lime's character totally changed, that he became a man with no scruples anymore, that he betrays and uses persons, but that he still has certain principles. He is godless man, possessed by evil and tempted by money. His only aim is earning money, he is greedy for money, a perversion of values. Visiting Schmidt again, she remains loyal to Lime. At Calloway's office, he is informed that Harbin was in Limes's coffin and that Winkler and Cooler will be arrested, but not Lime and Kurtz. Martins decides to be used for bait, because he lost his faith in Lime's friendship. So he makes another appointment with Lime. At the meeting, Lime realises the trap and flees. The police and Martins persecute him through the sewer system and in the end Martins wounds and shoots Lime.

IV. Thoughts on the novel

The novel deals with the main theme of friendship and betrayal. Martins betrays Lime and Lime betrays Schmidt and himself, only Schmidt remains loyal. The characters also use each other, so that there cannot be a happy ending. Martins lost his idol and in the end he even shoots him, but why? For the sake of justice or revenge or pity? The "good" Martins assimilated in the end to the "evil" Lime, because even the good is responsible for the death of three persons and maybe in the end Martins sees Lime as a rival against Schmidt, because throughout the book Schmidt loves Lime but not Martins. Martins was also in a discord and an inner conflict. He can be regarded as a hunter and Lime as the prey. The investigation of the protagonist does not find an individual culprit, but reveals political crimes in which children the victims are. The betrayal has also a religious character because even Judas betrayed Jesus. Greene can also be compared with Martins because his friend and boss in Sierra Leone, Kim Philby, was a betrayer, but Greene took no measures.

V. Features

• Literary discussion

The literary discussion is to regard as a medium to ridicule pseudo-intellectuals. He wants to point out that "a novel should tell a good story", it should entertain the reader, but it can imply more than that.

• Vienna and Prater's Great Wheel

It is a Human-like description. The destroyed Vienna can show the destroyed friendship of Lime and Martins and also the lost of any value. First Martins believed in friendship but then killed Lime with mixed emotions. It is the perversion of values.

• Narrative technique

He changes between first-person narrator, omniscient narrator, observer-narrator and camera eye. It is "a new habit of narrative" in which stage directions are integrated.

• Symbolism and stylistic devices

He uses symbols, comparisons, metaphors, allusions, puns, comic relieves, sarcasm and irony.

• Interior monologue and characterising of Rollo Martins